The perpetual adversary: how Dutch security services perceived communism (1918-1989)

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The Perpetual Adversary. How Dutch Security Services Perceived Communism (1918-1989)

Constant Willem Hijzen [*]

Abstract: *»Der ewige Gegner. Die Wahrnehmung des Kommunismus durch den Niederländischen Geheimdienst (1918-1989)«.* For more than eighty years, Dutch security services perceived communism as the ultimate threat to national security. From its inception, the anticommunist threat perceptions contained references to foreign, possible, potential, and ideological elements of the communist threat. This put the activities of Dutch communists in a different light. Although for a long time there were well-grounded reasons to do so, we find that there were periods when the actual threatening character of Dutch communism decreased. However, the security services did not decrease their surveillance activities vis-à-vis this 'red menace'. To account for this discrepancy, we use insights from securitization theory, organizational studies, and intelligence studies to deconstruct threat perceptions. We find that whenever actually threatening events, such as the revolutionary threat of 1918 or the World Wars, became part of a distant past, the security services emphasized the symbolic and potential nature of the communist threat. The symbolic character of the threat, institutionalized and continually reinforced by processes of cognitive bias, thus accounted for its unchanging threatening character. Only through external intervention have these perceptions changed.

Keywords: security services, threat perceptions, securitization, communism, conspiracy, organization theory, cognitive closure.

1. Introduction

"A cunning plot," a former employee of the Dutch security service said, referring to the collapse of world communism in the early 1990s. He had dedicated his whole working life to opposing communism. Communists "were that smart." The fall of communism therefore "certainly seemed to be a plot," the former intelligence officer reasoned, because it benefited the communists in two ways. On the one hand, communists were now free to come to and move around in the West. They would have no problems bringing in weaponry. On the other hand, in the former, in the former communist countries in Central and

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Eastern Europe, chaos would follow after the collapse of communism. So after a couple of years, still according to the former intelligence officer, people would start longing for communism again and then communists would be able to seize power again, this time supported by a veritable majority of the population.[1]

This view of communism would not have raised many eyebrows, say, fifty years earlier, when the Cold War started. But in 1998, when many of the former communist regimes had already successfully transformed into capitalist and democratic state systems and had exchanged their political elites correspondingly, these words appeared to be somewhat outdated (Best, Gebauer and Salheiser 2012). However, the comment was not just an individual aberration; on an organizational level, anticommunist threat perceptions proved to be persistent too. Even when other security issues such as student radicalism and international and domestic terrorism came to the fore, during the 1960s and 1970s, and politicians and activist organizations pushed the security service to end its interference with domestic communist organizations, the leading cadre of the security service stuck to its anticommunist position. The service held that since the essence of communism did not change, „the policy of the security service remained unchanged." Opposing this threat, the respective heads of service adamantly decided, should therefore be maintained as the cardinal responsibility of the security service.[2]

How should we account for this unflinching belief in the threatening nature of communism?

"Beginning from the known," as one of the fundamentals of the intelligence profession prescribes, the historiography on Dutch intelligence and security paints us a picture of a security service unwilling or unable to change in principle. Keeping a certain distance to socio-political actors in the environment because of its secret character, the Dutch security service maintained its autonomy in determining threats too. In its own perception, the security service thought it was better equipped to assess the danger of communism than ministers or members of parliament (De Valk 1996, 11, 44; Engelen 2007, 69-70, 236). This observation helps us to grasp a very important contributing factor to the continuity in threat perceptions, i.e. organizational dynamics and logics, but

[1] Interview with an anonymous former employee of *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* in a radio documentary, 'Going back on track: serving the country', VPRO radio documentary, broadcast 15th November 1998; *Het Parool*, 17. October 1998, 'That good Cold War: interviews with six employees of the *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*'.

[2] E.g. Aurora meeting 3rd May 1965 [the so-called Aurora meetings were meetings between the head of the security service and his managers of the different departments, held two or three times a week to discuss current affairs]; Semi Static Archive of the *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*, Report of meeting between head of the BVD and the minister of Interior Affairs, 8th June 1967 and 12th January 1982.

it fails to shed light on the question of why organizational logics dictate this particular outcome.

In this article we argue that although the security services did perceive and analyze alterations within international and domestic communism, they were not able or willing to 'desecuritize' the communist threat. In this argument we will stress the importance of symbolic and organizational influences on the way threat perceptions evolved over time and argue that 'desecuritization' as an internal decision was not an option. Only external intervention could fundamentally alter these perceptions.

1.1 Theoretical Orientation

The specter of worldwide communism is pre-eminently associated with the realm of conspiracy theories. Conspiracies can be, as stated in the introduction to this HSR Special Issue by Beatrice de Graaf and Cornel Zwierlein, part of security and conspiracy 'dispositives'. Dispositives, according to Michel Foucault who coined the concept, are 'heterogeneous ensembles' of 'discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures' and many other things (De Graaf and Zwierlein 2013, in this HSR Special Issue). As the aim of this article is to understand the continuity in anti-communist threat perceptions, it would stretch too far to look at all facets of a supposed anticommunist 'security dispositive', let alone a communist 'conspiracy dispositive' (De Graaf and Zwierlein 2013, in this HSR Special Issue; Balzacq 2011; Buzan, Waever and De Wilde 1998, 23).

Instead we ask the question of why the Dutch security services considered communism to be a menace for such a long time, even though its character changed in important respects. To put it more precisely we ask which dimensions of the communist threat changed over the years, why other aspects never changed at all, and why the security service for such a long period of time never decided to terminate the operational and analytical intelligence activities in communist circles.

A possible answer to this question would be that communism *was* threatening all those years. Some authors follow this line of reasoning and emphasize the strong ties between Western communist parties and 'Moscow' (Guiat 2003, 176). The communist parties' mere existence thus justified authorities worrying and security services opposing the communist parties.[3] Although we agree that in certain periods communism seemed to be a grave threat, we assume that nothing is essentially a menace. People interpret events, groups, and situations as threatening and construct representations of that threat (Balzacq 2011, 2; Hansen 2006, 25-8). To understand why communism was an enduring threat in

[3] Right-wing politicians and thinkers in particular emphasized the continued threatening character of communist organizations, e.g. Frits Bolkestein (1998).

the eyes of Dutch security services over time, we have to understand the way these threat perceptions came about and how they altered throughout the decades of the twentieth century.

To do this, we look at insights from securitization theory, organization theory, and intelligence studies. On the one hand, these theories offer insights in the genesis of security policies and the role of threat perceptions. In addition, they describe organizational mechanisms, which can help us find the causes for (resistance to) change in threat perceptions and security policies within the security services. On the other hand, these insights provide analytical tools to deconstruct the Dutch security services' perceptions of communism, which we will use to operationalize these insights. Before we elaborate on the operationalization, we will briefly outline the different theoretical insights.

The first of these is *securitization theory*, developed by the Copenhagen School. Ole Waever, Barry Buzan, and Jaap de Wilde, the proponents of this school, hold that issues in the security domain bear extraordinary importance and legitimate the use of extraordinary security measures. Issues are thus framed as security issues by (groups of) people, thus 'making' something "a security problem through discursive politics." 'Securitization' is understood as "a set of interrelated practices, and the processes of their production, diffusion, and reception/translation that bring threats into being" (Waever 1996, 106; Balzacq 2011, 1-2). Although we do not look at all 'interrelated practices' and processes, we can translate the concept to the world of security services; a problem is 'securitized' when the security service considers it a concern requiring its attention. 'Desecuritization', on the other hand, means that the securitized issue is pushed back into the domain of normal politics (Roe 2004, 284). For the security service this meant that it would no longer consider the issue as threatening and therefore ended its activities to gather, analyze, and disseminate intelligence on the specific issue, group, or individual.

This approach to security affairs is fruitful in different ways. To begin with, it allows us to regard the security services' threat perceptions as a construction, which actively 'produced', interpreted, translated, and disseminated. The security services painted a picture of the nature and extent of specific threats. This practice consists of processes of interpretation, translation, and representation. In other words the security services label specific problems, developments, groups, and individuals as a threat to the democratic order or state security. Securitization theory enables us to look into the different aspects of this process, introducing different analytical concepts, three of which we will use for operationalization (see below).

Another fruitful perspective offered by the Copenhagen theorists is their emphasis on the symbolic character of the security domain. Central to the securitization argument is framing. A 'securitizing' actor uses all kinds of 'heuristic artefacts', such as image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, and emotions, in order to convince his audience that the issue at stake is indeed a matter of na-

tional security (Balzacq 2011, 3). We interpret these artefacts as symbols. A symbol by definition refers to something other than itself, and aims to evoke certain attitudes, impressions, or events (Edelman 1964, 6). It can refer to material things, in the sense that a national flag refers to 'the country' and a particular uniform refers to a certain group. But it can also refer to immaterial things such as ideas, norms, and values, which in turn can evoke fears, a sense of community, and other states of being. In this sense, government policies refer not only to their factual statements, but also to the norms and values that lie behind them (Korsten 2005, 8-9).

The security domain is inherently symbolic. In the first place, intelligence and security services can be understood as symbols, since their sheer existence indicates that states care for their national security, that they believe an adversary is present or can enter the stage, that his or her intentions are hostile, that something vital is at stake, and that a security service is capable of protecting the cherished values (cf. De Valk 1996, 25; Balzacq 2011, 15-8).

Secondly, security services frame threats, adversaries, suspicious groups, political foes, and other vices in such a way that their activity or presence is part of a bigger picture: a possible (horrific) future, a detrimental state of affairs, a potential catastrophe, conflict, or crisis. The mere presence of communists invoked feelings of fear and aversion, because these individuals and organizations referred to something other than themselves, i.e. the possible violation of shared norms and beliefs, or the possible loss of what society values. To be more precise: since the Dutch communists, just like their counterparts all over the world, aimed at bringing down capitalism and establishing world socialism in its place, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' demanded a worldwide revolution (Verrips 1995, 3-4).[4] In the eyes of the Dutch security services, part of the political establishment, communist parties thus symbolized the possible breakdown of democratic order and the installation of a totalitarian regime. As long as communist parties held on to these goals, they posed a threat, which the security service sought to neutralize (Engelen 1995, 14; 2007, 224; De Graaff and Wiebes 1994, 13-4).

To understand how and why these perceptions were institutionalized over time, we rely, as a second theoretical orientation for this article, on insights from *organization theory*. Organization theorists are preoccupied with the question of how and why organizations and bureaucracies originate and develop over time. They study all aspects of organizations, from their structural and cultural genesis to the interaction with actors in the institutional environment. The classical school of organization theory, based on the work of sociologist Max Weber, paid a lot of attention to bureaucratic organizations, assuming that bureaucratic organizations are characterized by a rational application of author-

[4] E.g. *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Year report B (leftist organizations) 1935.

ity, structure, and process. Organizations specialize and compartmentalize to become more efficient in their tasks. In more recent organization theory, it is assumed that because of this specializing and compartmentalizing, organizations cannot be considered as neutral, wholly rational constructions. Instead the people who set up or reorganize organizations structure organizations according to their normative preferences and interests. Some lines of communication are possible, whilst others are not. Organization structure is, so to speak, agenda setting (Hastedt and Skelley 2009, 115-6).

This applies to the Dutch security services in particular. Most of the Western states institutionalized their intelligence and security activities during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, especially in the course of war or during international crises, to oppose an enemy. Essential activities of these apparatuses were to obtain knowledge about this opponent or enemy, being another individual, country, organization, or state (Moran 2011, 48). Even in peace time, opposing a potential enemy became central to the existence of these services. That is why without such an opponent, the existence of these organizations would be very hard to justify and thus 'the other', a threat, or an adversary was of essential, not to say existential importance for security services. Communists suited the role of this 'other' eminently, because they stood for the exact opposite political, economic, social, and cultural norms and values the civil, religious, and predominantly conservative oriented members and leaders of the security services embraced (Warner 2009, 16; De Valk 1996, 8-12, 16; Hansen 2006, 19-20).

A third theoretical insight which contributes to our understanding of the continuity in threat perceptions focuses on the internal processes of intelligence collection and analysis. It stems from the intelligence studies discipline and is called confirmation bias or cognitive closure. In studying intelligence failures like Pearl Harbour in 1941 and the attacks of 9/11, scholars point to different shortcomings in the intelligence cycle (the process with which agencies collect, analyze, report, and disseminate intelligence). One of these shortcomings is found on the level of the individual employee of an intelligence organization, and is cognitive-psychological in nature. It is called (confirmation) bias or 'cognitive closure'. This problem arises from the human mind, which is naturally inclined to accept information only if it corresponds to existing information (Johnston 2005, 20-1). This holds true not only for the brain, but for human behaviour in general: custom is the dominant guide of human life (Kuhns 2003, 89). It is also true for intelligence organizations as a whole. While they study threats which often comprise (parts of) whole societies which continually change, intelligence organizations are often large and bureaucratic organizations characterized by tradition. It is therefore inherently difficult to adapt to these changing threats (Hattlebrekke and Smith 2010, 180-1).

To operationalize these theoretical insights we will again turn to the concept of securitization. The theory draws our attention to different elements of threat

perceptions and security policies: the referent subject, referent object, and the security measures or policies aimed at neutralizing the perceived threat. Firstly, the referent subject refers to the source of origin of the threat. Secondly, referent objects refer to things "that are seen to be existentially threatened and have a legitimate claim to survival." In other words this is the perception of that which is at risk and is worth protecting. And by security measures, finally, we mean the policies or courses of action which are proposed to counter and neutralize the perceived threat (Buzan, Waever and De Wilde 1998, 36; Balzacq 2011, 1-3).

In this paper, we will address the elements of and changes in these constitutive elements of the security services' perceptions of the communist specter in three different periods: between 1918 and 1940, between 1940 and 1960, and finally between 1960 and 1989.

The first element pertains to the depiction of the revolutionary and communist threat in terms of the *referent subject*. We will trace the security services' perceptions of the referent subject by looking at the nature of the threat. Who exactly was the alleged perpetrator? Were Dutch revolutionaries and communists acting as autonomous agents, only assisted by international fellows and comrades, or was Moscow behind all of it, and was some central agency using Dutch sister organizations as a fifth column, pulling them on a string like puppets? We also scrutinize what was deemed so threatening about their existence, their recent actions, or utterances and the concrete events or developments provoked these perceptions. In some instances the security service used very concrete and tangible descriptions, whilst in others it chose more abstract and intangible wordings. In some periods communists were more of an immediate threat than in others, when the symbolic, potential character of the threat dominated. This was related to the spatial dimension of the referent subject, which varied from a global scope of the adversary, when the security services emphasized the communists' aspirations for world revolution, to a European, national, regional, or even local range of the communist adversary. Some threats, the security services noted, were international in nature, but gravitated for example towards Amsterdam. In other cases they even evolved around a specific individual.[5]

Secondly, we will analyze the threat perception of the services in terms of a *referent object*, the supposed target of the threat (Balzacq 2011, 3). Here we look at the scope of that which was perceived to be in danger, ranging from the government as a whole to democracy, the democratic order, social order, or even freedom in general. In these depictions we look at the images, analogies, or metaphors the security services used to describe what was at stake (cf. De Graaf 2011, 130-1). Although these depictions changed over time, we have to

[5] E.g. *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Report number 06632, 24th November 1933.

be aware that the main foundation of the services was in fact the defense of the democratic order and state security. So in the eyes of the security services the referent object of the communist threat was clear; if something was a concern of the security service, then the democratic order or state security was at stake. The wordings and images used to describe what was being threatened, however, did change in the course of the century.[6]

Thirdly, we will look at the *response* of the security service to these (changing) threat perceptions. In relation to these threat perceptions, we will ask whether the security service found it necessary to adjust its repertoires of action. Were operational activities decreased or increased? Was the proposed action related to the organizational structure or cognitive bias? Did the security service formulate explicit reasons to improve the intelligence position on the communist adversary? In intelligence terms, this could imply a scaling up to more far-reaching intelligence methods, for example from *open source intelligence* (OSINT), in the form of reading papers, publications, and other publicly available writings, to the use of informants and agents in an object organization (*human intelligence*; HUMINT) or microphones and telephone tapes, which is called *signals intelligence* (SIGINT) (O'Connell 2004, 189-99).[7] Another possibility was that the security service expanded its action repertoires, for example by introducing new methods or strategies. We also address the question of how new informational, communicational, and technological techniques informed these stages of securitization (Balzacq 2011, 3, 7; De Graaf and Zwierlein 2013, in this HSR Special Issue). Finally, we will also gauge the socio-psychological dynamics of these responses: were they related to the processes of 'cognitive closure' and organizational developments we described above?

2. Revolutionary Turbulence (1918-1940)

2.1 Fright of the Revolution – The Referent Subject

Socialism originated in the nineteenth century. Radical thinkers like Pierre Joseph Proudhon inspired middle and working class people around the world to aspire for a more egalitarian society. In the Netherlands, several radical social-

[6] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 6911, Letter from the coordinator of the intelligence and security services F. Kist to prime minister Drees, 21 January 1957; Semi Static Archive of the *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*, Report of meeting between head of the BVD and the minister of Interior Affairs, 8th June 1967; *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, Monthly overview December 1959.

[7] E.g. Semi Static Archive of the *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*, Report of meeting between head of the BVD and the minister of Interior Affairs, 8th June 1967.

ist parties were formed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although the labor movement established the Social Democratic Workers' Party (*Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij*, SDAP) in 1894, which preferred to operate within the boundaries dictated by parliamentary democracy, radical socialism survived. The radicals interpreted socialism in a much stricter sense than their SDAP counterparts, advocating the unchaining of a revolution which would end world capitalism and turn the means of production into the hands of the proletariat. Whilst radical socialist parties, such as the Social Democratic Party (SDP), initially only acquired the support of a few hundred members, membership doubled during the revolutionary unrest in Russia and Germany at the end of the First World War (De Rooij 2005, 113-45; Verrips 1995, 3).

Authorities started to worry when in fall 1917 the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, seized power in Russia. In the Netherlands a harsh winter and deplorable economic conditions were expected, so the head of the Amsterdam police T. M. Roest van Limburg told his inspector K.H. Broekhoff to pay special attention to "phenomena pointing at revolutionary movements" (De Graaff 1997, 98). Whilst some radical socialists mobilized soldiers and workers to form councils, which could help overtake state power just as the Bolsheviks had done in Russia, revolution still seemed far away (Engelen 2000, 33-4). The end of the First World War in November 1918 brought revolution closer to home: in the face of coming defeat in the war, revolutionary violence broke out in various places in Germany. This led the Dutch authorities to fear that this "revolutionary stream would inexorably come westward," to the Netherlands.[8]

Then, on 12th November, the external political threat manifested itself in domestic appeals for revolution. In parliament one of the founders of the social democratic party, representative and party leader Pieter Jelles Troelstra called on the government to abdicate and on the workers to assume the right to govern themselves (Wijne 1999, 8-12). Although there were no widespread disturbances, in some cities the revolution was seemingly gaining momentum. The day after Troelstra had spoken before parliament, the Amsterdam-based radical socialist David Wijnkoop called his audience to arms during a speech in order to liberate one of their comrades from the military barracks where he was held (Kaal 2008, 23-4). In Maastricht and Heerlen, revolutionary unrest erupted as well. In Aken, just over the border, "thousands of Spartacists" (German revolutionaries) were standing by, ready to take their revolution beyond the border, authorities feared (De Graaff 2007, 53-4).[9] A.R. Zimmerman, the mayor of Rotterdam, had heard rumors of the revolutionary agitation and feared that revolutionary chaos was about to break loose. In response Zimmerman invited

[8] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministry of Finance, entry 2.08.41, inventory number 1390.

[9] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Report number 01319, 31st May 1919.

the leaders of the local department of the socialist SDAP party in Rotterdam to the city hall, allegedly to discuss a possible peaceful transition to socialism (Bosmans 1979).

The events of November 1918 were perceived as a twofold threat. The revolutionaries in Germany posed the first and most alarming threat. Although the worst unrest in Germany was subdued in the ensuing months, the so-called Spartacists posed a continuing threat. The military intelligence and security service GS III, and from 1919 on the Central Intelligence Service (the first Dutch security service), consequently kept reporting rumors of Spartacists planning to bring revolution to the Netherlands. Military messengers and units policing the eastern Dutch borders dispatched alarming reports to The Hague, warning that the government should "prepare for the worst."[10] When on 11th January 1923 a French-Belgian military operation started to occupy the Ruhr area in western Germany, security services again ventilated fear of revolutionary agitation. Only when the troops retreated two years later did the "spill-over threat" start to wane (Fischer 2003, 290-3).

The other element constituting the referent object of this revolutionary threat was of a domestic nature. To ascertain whether the revolutionary unrest would really spill over into the Netherlands, the central and local governments needed information on the intentions, activities, and possible supporters of the revolution such as extreme leftist parties and their members. How would these radical socialists react to the agitation across the eastern border? From this moment on, the security service systematically collected intelligence on the communist parties, revolutionary socialist organizations, anarchists, free thinkers, pacifists, left-wing religious groups, and even on the obscure movement of the Esperantists. Citizens maintaining contacts with revolutionaries abroad were considered a threat as well (De Graaff 1997, 102; Hijzen 2012).

Whilst the external referent subject faded away, the domestic component of the threat retained its threatening character in the perception of the services and their political masters. The Dutch revolutionaries did in fact take their orders from an organization which determined the policies for communist parties worldwide: the Komintern. In 1919 the Third Communist International had decided that communists worldwide should fight, if necessary with arms, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie (Hallas 2008, 10-25). The perceived threat of the revolutionaries and communists thus retained an acute character in the years following the 'November 18 events'.[11]

As time progressed however and the revolutionary events at the end of the First World War became part of an increasingly distant past, the depictions of the domestic revolutionary adversary seemed to shift as well. To be sure, noth-

[10] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Report number 03334, 22nd March 1920.
[11] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Concise overview of the general situation number 16, 16th October 1920.

ing changed in the goals of the Dutch communists: they still adhered to the ideal of a global revolution. But the urgency of the threat, in the mode of a November 1918 take-over scenario, seemed to disappear. The CI observed that things were 'relatively peaceful' in communist circles. As a consequence, it increasingly depicted the communist and revolutionary adversary in abstract terms. At a meeting with the police chiefs in 1928 the head of the security service, T.S. Rooseboom, spoke about 'Moscow' carrying out "very systematic actions to undermine all instruments of authority." And in later years, reports disseminated by the Central Intelligence Service spoke of 'revolutionary possibilities' and 'agitation'.[12] Communism was, in Rooseboom's words, foremost a "doctrine of subversion, by all conceivable means and in an almost scientific manner." The communists improved their art of subversion to such a high level of perfection, the security service reported, that even the leader of the national socialist party in Germany, Adolf Hitler, used 'communist techniques' in subverting legitimate state power.[13]

Notwithstanding this general threat assessment, on different occasions, the security service observed that the Communist Party of Holland had ceased to cause any agitation. In fact, the revolutionaries were losing terrain. By the end of 1928 the Central Intelligence Service noted that lately "communist party life was not very cheerful." The number of active supporters declined.[14] Where communism was on the wane and showed signs of 'slackness', new totalitarian and radical ideologies such as fascism and Nazism were gaining ground, the service observed somewhat uneasily. By 1933 the "communist party here in the Netherlands only stood a chance in intellectual circles," the security service reported.[15] And so the mass proportions of the communist threat decreased very clearly. The CI concluded in 1934 that the communist parties "were no longer the hazardous factor they were before."[16]

2.2 Order, Peace, and Authority at Risk – The Referent Object

What then was actually threatened by this red menace, what was at stake? According to the Dutch security service the revolutionary turbulence was a multifaceted threat, directed at a variety of objects.

In the November days of 1918 the first object of the communist threat appeared to be the military. If soldiers were susceptible to the revolutionary rhetoric, their allegiance to the fatherland was no longer guaranteed. When even in obscure provincial towns such as Kwadijk and Purmerend proper 'councils of

[12] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Report number 17651, 27th March 1928; *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Year reports B (leftist organizations) 1934, 1936, 1938.
[13] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Report number 23939, 21st November 1930.
[14] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Overview report number 4, 1928.
[15] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Report number 06632, 24th November 1933.
[16] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Report number 15449, 23rd November 1934.

workers and soldiers' were established, similar to the ones in Kiel or Petrograd (Saint Petersburg), subversion of the army from within became a real possibility, in the eyes of the military leadership (Blom and Stelling, 855-78; Engelen 2002, 384). For a state to preserve its power, it depends on the army. When called upon, soldiers had to be loyal, obeying the orders of the queen and fatherland, not those of the insurgents.

In response to this threat from within, army officers established a 'league of loyalists'.[17] Consequently, the military intelligence and security service GS III was instructed to monitor whether revolutionary texts or propaganda materials circulated within its ranks, and screened new recruits for their possible membership of revolutionary organizations. Commanders of the troops were ordered to notify the security service about any socialist activity within their ranks. Soldiers' complaints about deplorable clothing, shelter, or nourishment were from then on interpreted as acts of subversion: "whenever they kept complaining about the miserable food" or "deliberately provoked complaints in other ways," they were immediately suspected or accused of fueling revolutionary sentiments.[18]

A second vulnerability to this communist threat was located in the domain of public order, peace and authority. Despite the disquieting days of November 1918, however, the cabinet of Ruijs de Beerenbrouck as a whole was not convinced of the likelihood of a communist takeover. It did not fear that revolutionaries anywhere in the country had concrete plans or the capabilities to overthrow government or the democratic system as a whole. Only in Rotterdam did the SDAP manage to mobilize a substantial number of workers, thereby upsetting the public order and social peace, but in the rest of the country all was quiet (De Valk and Kappelhof, 85-6). Already on 13th November 1918, Ruijs de Beerenbrouck was informed by the military leadership that Pieter Jelles Troelstra, who had held his direful speech in parliament the day before, had withdrawn his statements and admitted his mistake. The General Staff of the Dutch army knew about Troelstra's pull back in advance, through military phone tapping, which supposedly put political worries at ease early on (Engelen 2002, 35-7).

The events had shown nonetheless that there was potential for revolutionary unrest or agitation. To reassure the people and soothe potential future rebellion in Dutch society, the cabinet of Ruijs de Beerenbrouck addressed the Dutch people in a proclamation, compiled in the night after Troelstra had held his speech. The proclamation was printed in every newspaper and placarded throughout the country; it stated that "in the interest of the rights and freedoms

[17] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Commander of the Military Position Hollands Diep and the Volkerak 1812-1922, entry 3.09.25, inventory number 218.
[18] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Report number 17651, 27th March 1928.

of the entire people" the government had decided to maintain "peace and order" (Wijne 1999, 29).

Instead of explicitly blaming the extreme left for the turmoil, the government consciously chose to emphasize peace, order, and authority. In so doing, the prime minister refrained from estranging the working class. By introducing different policies aimed at supporting the social and economic conditions of the workers' class and explicitly meeting socialist demands such as female suffrage, the government encapsulated the workers, thereby neutralizing possible future support for revolutionary appeals (Wijne 1999, 29-30). The majority of the political and administrative elite were truly convinced that it was not the marginal activities of socialists but public disorder in itself that was the real threat. In their eyes 'the people' or society at large would be lost without a proper working government in place. The Rotterdam Burgomaster, Zimmerman, was a good example of this fear: in response to the critique regarding his position in November 1918, he underlined that his major concern had not been the communists, but the 'phenomena of dissolution' as such. He had merely tried to 'calm the excitement', and still considered it his most important task to provide the people of Rotterdam with order and peace.[19]

2.3 Establishing the Security Service – The Response

The communist threat triggered the establishment of the first security service in the Netherlands. In 1918 the security service still had to be invented. During the November days of 1918, the military secret service GS III had performed domestic intelligence tasks (Engelen 2002, 35). One of the reasons for the fact that H.A.C. Fabius, head of GS III, was so well informed was that the Amsterdam police chief sent him lists with the names of revolutionaries and the members of revolutionary organizations in his city. His policemen visited political meetings of radical parties regularly, learning what these organizations were up to and writing down their names. Herewith the police constructed an increasingly complete picture of the membership of radical parties in their cities. Through these city reports, a national intelligence estimate on the revolutionary threat in the country as a whole could be constructed. This is exactly what Fabius suggested: to establish a civilian agency that could assemble such general intelligence on a regular basis (Kluiters 1993, 182).

Fabius' plans were received rather dispassionately. The police chiefs were reluctant to hand over information (and power) to a national, central security unit; and the minister of the interior and prime minister Ruijs de Beerenbrouck, who would have to carry the political and financial responsibility for the service, was not convinced of its value as such. He refused to spend money on the security service. After some deliberations, it was decided that the minister of

[19] *Het vaderland*, 18th November 1928.

warfare would pay the bills, while the political responsibility was consigned to the minister of the interior. It was a civilian security service after all. So, in 1919 the Central Intelligence Service (*Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, abbreviated as CI) was established. The service was of a small scale, operating under military wings, and relying heavily on the intelligence the municipal police gathered (Engelen 2002, 29-30).

Over the years, the CI collected intelligence on different kinds of threats, e.g. pacifism and from the second half of the 1930s on fascist and national socialist parties too. But from its inception, the most important object of attention was the political organizations of the labor movement and its extreme fringes. Based mainly on the police reports, the security service assembled extensive knowledge on the membership of Dutch social and political organizations on the extreme left, such as the Trotskyists, socialists, Bolsheviks, and communists (Hijzen 2012, 335-40). This knowledge became aggregated in different kinds of intelligence products, such as two weekly reports, yearly reports and the so-called black lists. These lists contained the names of all Dutch and international revolutionaries, and included comments on their 'status' as well. One was depicted as 'a dangerous communist', another as 'a revolutionary propagandist' and a third was described as offering logistical support to revolutionaries.[20]

2.4 No Longer the Hazardous Factor of Before – Concluding Remarks

When in November 1918 revolution broke out in Germany, the Dutch political establishment feared that similar developments could take place in their country as well. When Troelstra called for revolution at home too, some local politicians feared that revolution was about to break out. This established the symbolic character of Dutch socialist parties; the revolutionaries aspired to subvert public and political order, which was something the civil, confessional, and conservative middle class and political elite held in high esteem. Apart from an antirevolutionary law, the political elite did not take much action against this threat. The security service, established in 1919, was the one and only organization directed at monitoring this new threat. The small-scale service, granted with a limited budget, mainly collected police reports to do so. The threat was not publicly securitized or heavily politicized, which would have made the communist threat the center of political attention and an object of broader security policies. What was at stake, in the perception of politicians and the security service alike, was public order, peace, and authority and the threat of a population running wild on unrestrained instincts.

[20] *Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, Report number 83845a, 12th July 1939.

Until late in the 1920s the memory of November 1918 was enough to legitimize the continued attention towards left extremist political life. But when the years passed, and November 1918 became a more distant memory, the security service started framing the threat in more abstract terms. The threat transformed from an actual threat to a potential one. Revolutionary agitation was still a possible scenario, but it became a less likely one. In the words of the head of the security service T.S. Rooseboom, communism was showing signs of 'slackness'. It was no longer as hazardous as before.

3. Communists as the Next Oppressors (1940-1960)

3.1 The Creation of the Communist Fifth Column – Referent Subject

Then on 10th May 1940 everything changed. The German army invaded the Netherlands and after six days the military surrendered, while the Dutch government fled to London and parliament was suspended. The officers of the Central Intelligence Service took their refuge in London as well, thereby dissolving the existing intelligence infrastructure in the Netherlands. When on 29th May 1940 *Reichskommissar* Arthur Seyss-Inquart was installed as the highest authority in the Netherlands, Dutch sovereignty ceased to exist. In London Wilhelmina led the Dutch government to choose the side of the Allied Forces in the war. By opting for the Allied side, in the hope of regaining its sovereignty, the Dutch government became dependent upon Allied successes in the war and their strategies for the restoration of international security (Posthumus Meyjes 1958, 88; De Jong 1979, 75-6; Engelen 2002 47-8).

For the Dutch government the communists lost their priority to the national socialist regime as the most comprehensive threat. Social democrats had moreover assumed ministerial seats under the De Geer cabinet in 1939, so the perceived distance between the social democrats on the one side and the confessional and liberal conservative parties on the other had diminished. Communists were very active in the resistance, centralizing their resistance activities in the nationally organized 'Council of Resistance' in 1943. Their important role in the resistance gave the communists a lot of goodwill and credibility amongst the population. Communists underwent a transformation from being the enemy into representing a staunch ally in the resistance movements that sprang up all over the Netherlands (De Jong 1975, 161-5; Verrips 1995, 138-73).

However, this apparent political truce in opposition towards the German aggressor was riven by a continued suspicion of communists. The intelligence and security agencies, established by the Dutch government in exile between 1940 and 1942, observed that different resistance groups were deeply divided

along religious and ideological lines. The Bureau of Intelligence, created on 28th November 1942, observed for example that communist and socialist groups refused to cooperate.[21] The orthodox protestant *Landelijke Knokploegen* (National Fighting Squads) and the *Landelijke Organisatie van Onderduikers* (National Organization of Refugees), for example, deeply mistrusted the communists belonging to the Council of Resistance (De Jong 1976, 983).

Fear of communism resurfaced in government circles, when in 1943 after two years of heavy fighting the war finally seemed to take a positive turn for the Allies. As the prospect of winning and ending the war was discussed during the cabinet meetings, the Dutch government decided to materialize its contingency planning for the 'transitional period'; the vacuum of power between the departing German government and the return of the Dutch authorities (Beyens 2009, 108-109). The cabinet feared that in the face of a power vacuum, public order and social peace could not be upheld. On the one hand the cabinet in London feared civilians taking the matter into their own hands by executing alleged collaborators, and on the other they saw once again the specter of a communist takeover. The Gerbrandy cabinet hence took security measures to prevent a "repetition of November 18" from happening (De Jong 1979, 1352-3).

Many prominent members of the resistance shared these fears. While the end of the war was approaching, non-communist resistance groups started to worry about what all these armed and well organized communists would do after the war. Would they hand over their weaponry to the competent authority? Or were they planning on keeping the weapons to seize power, capitalizing on the transitional period between the defeat of the Germans and the return of the Dutch government? When news arrived on a thwarted Belgium coup d'état in November 1944, many resistance fighters became alert for communists trying to stage their revolution at the end of the war (Beyens 2009, 107-8).

Although these fears did not materialize, they survived far into the postwar period. Between September 1944, when the South of the Netherlands was liberated, and 5th May 1945 when the rest of the country was freed as well, no communist agitation took place, nor in the months thereafter. Fears that it might happen in the future nevertheless found their way into the first postwar security service, the Bureau of National Security, established on 29th May 1945. Many of the employees of this service were former resistance fighters (Engelen 2007, 26-7). In January 1946, the Bureau of National Security reported a large number of non-authorized weapons within Dutch society, a state of affairs the service thought profoundly 'alarming'. In addition, rumor spread

[21] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries of Interior Affairs and General Affairs in London, entry 2.04.76, inventory number 161, Overview of the situation in the Netherlands, compiled by the Bureau of Intelligence, end of October 1943.

that the communist party, quickly resurrected after the war, planned to establish a 'communist secret service'.[22]

Therefore as soon as 1946, the security service concluded that communism was the central threat in the postwar world – again (Hofland 1972, 144; Witte 1989, 38).[23] This priority was informed first of all by the conservative, religious, and resistance background of the intelligence officers. Most of them were highly motivated to defend their fatherland as they had done during the war, only now from another totalitarian regime: the Soviet Union. Secondly, the war played a crucial role in transforming the resurfacing communist threat into a much more menacing phenomenon. In 1946, communism appeared to become a mass-based threat again when in the first postwar elections ten percent of the Dutch electorate voted for the Communist Party of the Netherlands.[24] And it could be assumed that many more people were passively supporting the communists because of their resistance efforts, and due to the role of the Red Army in fighting the Nazis.[25] Moreover, the *potentiality* that characterized the prewar communist threat, had obtained an alarming *actuality* during the war. The German national socialist regime had demonstrated how quickly a totalitarian party could gain power, and how devastating the consequences were. In a way, the communist threat obtained national socialist and German traits.

This transformation and expansion of the communist threat perception was reflected in an external and internal element of the referent subject of the threat. The external threat consisted of the possibility of a military attack by the Soviet Union. The communist takeovers in Eastern and Central Europe had demonstrated that Stalin was no less expansive in his ambitions than Hitler had been (Palmer 2007, 871; Van der Boom 2001, 33). The internal element of the communist fear related to the allegiance of members of Dutch communist parties to Moscow. They had never renounced their dreams of world revolution and they still took orders directly from Moscow. The communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 underscored this fear (De Graaff 1997, 56; De Liagre Böhl 1982, 18). Although the coup did not lead Dutch authorities to believe that Dutch communists were capable of a similar operation, the security service did report an exultant mood in communist circles. Communists publicly

[22] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of *Bureau Nationale Veiligheid*, entry 2.04.80, inventory number 3528, Secret report of *Bureau Nationale Veiligheid*, bureau B, number 1, 12th January 1946.

[23] Interview with an anonymous former employee of *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* in a radio documentary, 'Going back on track: serving the country', VPRO radio documentary, broadcast 18th October 1998.

[24] Dutch election results 1918-now. <http://www.nlverkiezingen.com/GrLinks.html>

[25] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of *Bureau Nationale Veiligheid*, entry 2.04.80, inventory number 3528, Monthly report January 1946.

claimed that the Russians 'were closer than ever' and that revolution was inevitably coming to the Netherlands as well.[26]

From this point on, the Dutch communists were considered a 'fifth column'. The fifth column image stemmed from the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and referred to a 'class of insurgents' within the city walls or in this case national boundaries; a large number of agents, secretly helping the enemy outside the gates or borders by spying and sabotaging, in order to undermine the defense capabilities of the state. Although this specter of a centralized and well organized group, directed by a foreign power and capable of anything was a phantom, the Dutch public anxiously supposed it was very real (De Jong 1953, 3-4).

The same happened to the communists. A military counterpart of the civilian security service described Dutch communists as "a more or less centrally organized group of party members, performing all kinds of services for the future enemy, which in addition will fight shoulder to shoulder with the invading enemy columns, as soon as the moment of overt struggle has come."[27]

This 'fifth column' image connected the internal and external communist threat perceptions and moreover gave them a military character. Dutch communists were considered as actual spies and saboteurs for Stalin.[28] Where the CPSU had exerted influence through the Komintern before the war as well, it now seemed to direct the Dutch communists to help prepare for a direct and military attack on the West. The first head of the *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* Louis Einthoven considered the Dutch communists to be in the frontlines of that offensive. Although Dutch communists had not yet proven to pose a serious threat to law and order, "the threat was creeping in." The government should be "cautious for the relentless subverting activities common in communist circles." Communists seized every opportunity to "test the solidity of the existing polity and profit politically from possible critical situations."[29]

In the eyes of Louis Einthoven and his organization, communism had thus become "a gigantic threat." It had adopted dimensions it did not have before the war and that had made communism a more massive, acute, and existentially

[26] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 1151, Reactions from the communist side on the known events in Czechoslovakia, memorandum of J.G. Crabbendam for prime minister L. Beel, 12th April 1948.

[27] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 11709, G2B [military intelligence service] to the *Commissie van Coördinatie voor de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten*, Various thoughts on fifth column activities, 10th November 1950.

[28] Semi Static Archive of the *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*, Memorandum of A. Kuipers, Sketch for an effective organization of the service, 1959.

[29] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 11707, Secret advice to the council of ministers, 1950.

threatening phenomenon than ever before. Communism, in Einthoven's words, was inherently prone to strive for world domination. It "recoiled from nothing" and "had an endless amount of resources."[30]

3.2 Western Democracies at Risk – The Referent Object

Due to the Second World War the referent object of this perceived threat changed as well. From an abstract threat to public order, social peace, and political authority, communism regained its 'November 18 traits'. From 1943 onwards, as we have described in the previous paragraph, the Dutch government and prominent resistance members feared that communists might seize the opportunity during the transitional period immediately following the war. Just as Zimmerman had expressed his fear that the absence of a disciplining authority might unleash primitive passions among the population, now the Military Authority, responsible for upholding order and state power during this period, assumed that a licentious population was indeed difficult to restrain again. This might even lead to bloodbaths. Communists knew this too, the military reasoned. Hence "this too was a welcome instance for inauspicious or extremist elements to strike a blow" (cited in Witte 1990, 39-40).

In the months following the defeat of Germany, the fears of large-scale agitation and violence among the Dutch population did not materialize. Communism nevertheless continued to haunt the security services for the decades to come, only now for different reasons and with different effects. Until the 1960s two major changes occurred in the referent object of the communist threat.

In the first place, the referent object of the domestic communist threat shifted from the idea of a rampaging population combined with communists seizing power, to a more concrete and short-term threat. As indicated above, the benevolent attitude of a large proportion of the Dutch population and the communists' victory in the elections of 1946 troubled officials and politicians alike. Leaders of the confessional workers' unions feared that 'their' workers would desert to communist unions, and church leaders considered the antireligious communists to be a major threat to Christianity (Koedijk 1997, 57). Although the cabinet of Louis Beel did not want to take radical security measures – instead it believed that economic recovery was the key to depriving communism of its matrix – the security services geared up to combat communism (De Liagre Böhl 2003, 214-29).

Einthoven identified three arenas in which communists would launch their subversive activities. The first was the political arena. As ordered by the communist international, reestablished in 1947 as the Kominform, the Communist

[30] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 305, Comment of L. Einthoven for prime minister L. Beel, 10th March 1948.

Party of the Netherlands tried to win votes (Havenaar 1993, 69; Hogan 1997, 17). In order to secure the normal functioning of the democratic order and to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining influence, the security service therefore tried to monitor and neutralize the different tactics the communists applied to strive for political influence. These tactics changed over the years. By the end of the 1950s the security service observed that the communist party had abandoned its attempts to grow electorally. Instead Moscow instructed them to "infiltrate nationalist parties, in such a way that they implement policies which are consistent with Moscow's requirements."[31]

The second object of communist infiltrations was the economy. When, for example, in September 1948 communist unions called their members to go on strike, the intelligence analysts of the security service concluded that they only did this to "disrupt the economic equilibrium." Communists hoped to destabilize the political and economic order. Calling for strikes was part of this strategy to cause 'agitation'.[32] Therefore the security service structurally gathered intelligence on the communist involvement in the workers' movement. Infiltration in 'bona fide', i.e. noncommunist workers' unions appeared to be an important strategy in the economic sphere as well.[33]

The third locus of communist activities was the most tangible one: the government apparatus. One of the most important tasks of the postwar security services was to protect vulnerable positions in bureaucracy and access to confidential political and military information (Koedijk 2010, 295-300). On the one hand, this meant that the security service advised and trained employees of government agencies to secure their buildings, confidential policy documents, rooms, their gates, et cetera. On the other hand, the service carried out vetting requests and inquiries into the political background of applicants to a position within government agencies and private firms carrying out work commissioned by the ministry of Defense (Engelen 1995, 107-9).

The second change in the referent object against which the communist threat was purportedly directed, was its increasing ideological and international framing. To be more precise: whereas before the war communism was framed as threatening public order and social peace, in Einthoven's days the security

[31] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 11930; BVD contribution to a report from the *Comité Verenigde Inlichtingendiensten Nederland*, 4th May 1960.

[32] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 1152, Report on the social-economic activities of the *Communistische Partij Nederland*, 16th September 1948.

[33] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 11707, Draft circular for high level civil servants, *Commissie van Coördinatie voor de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten*, 27th January 1950.

service explicitly indicated that the communists were undermining the domestic and international order as such and aimed to install a communist dictatorship. Both the referent subject and its object had assumed totalitarian proportions, according to the service. Nothing less than national sovereignty and democratic liberty were at stake.

Not only on a national scale, but on an international plane as well. In 1948 the Netherlands co-founded the Western European Union, a military alliance between the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, and France. And in April 1949 the Dutch joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO. This military alliance was led by the United States. For the Netherlands, becoming a member implied alignment with the US (Hellema 2001, 148-52; De Liagre Böhl 2003, 220-222). National security had now in fact become international security, because the Western states agreed that an attack on one of the member states was to be perceived as an attack on them all. The *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* was appointed as the national security authority in 1949, responsible for securing the governmental and military apparatus within a European and Transatlantic context (De Geus 1998, 61-3).

From this moment on, the security service increasingly interpreted the activities of the Communist Party of the Netherlands in this international context. Their activities were not only threatening to the Dutch democratic system, but to that of all member states. Dutch communists were therefore seen as "a constant threat" to "Western countries, Western democratic society, and Western culture."[34]

3.3 Defensive and Offensive Intelligence Techniques – The Response

These enhanced dimensions of the communist threat legitimized a whole range of new security measures. The *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* became incomparably larger, more professional, and offensive than its predecessors had ever been. We will trace these changes along two paths: one institutional, the other technical and methodical.

During the war, successor organizations to the *Centrale Inlichtingendienst* were established under British auspices. The British trained recruits, provided the proper equipment, and led the Dutch intelligence missions in the occupied homeland. Other Dutchmen learned intelligence in practice while being active in the resistance (De Jong 1979, 837). Although the first postwar service (the Bureau of National Security (*Bureau Nationale Veiligheid*)) was mainly established to deal with the consequences of war and occupation, the Central Securi-

[34] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 11707, Draft circular for high level civil servants, *Commissie van Coördinatie voor de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten*, 27th January 1950.

ty Service (*Centrale Veiligheidsdienst*), established in April 1946, had a much wider ambition. The CVD was renamed the Domestic (or internal) Security Service: *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* (acronym: BVD) in August 1949 and was stocked with more than 600 employees and several millions of guilders as an annual budget (Engelen 2010, 59-70).[35]

On the methodical and technical front, the security service was best equipped to oppose the communist threat. Organizational theory accounts for this. Organizations are not neutral and free of values and norms, as we mentioned in the introduction; they reflect the normative preferences of the people involved in the establishment of the organization. In this case, that was Louis Einthoven, head of the respective security services between 1945 and 1961. Einthoven designed an organizational structure to know, counter, and neutralize the communist adversary in an offensive way. Some administrative units of the BVD for example exactly mirrored the structure of the Communist Party of the Netherlands (Engelen 2007, 27-8).

Within the BVD the domestic communist threat was the responsibility of the 'B division' of the security service, which was one of the largest divisions of the security service since its inception. Employees of 'B', together with some other units specialized in the technical and operational facets of intelligence work, collected and analyzed intelligence. The BVD read newspapers, pamphlets, magazines, and brochures of organizations, worked with informants and agents, sometimes employing microphones to listen in on specific conversations, and copied administrations during so-called *surreptitious entry* operations. The BVD thus specialized in and became very good at knowing every listed communist in the Netherlands, their backgrounds, plans, and thoughts (Engelen 1995, 375; 2000, 40-1).

In the second half of the 1950s the perceived acuteness and actuality of the threat permitted Einthoven to take the fight against communism a step further: the BVD added psychological warfare to its intelligence repertoire. Using a technique he and his employees learned from the British and the Americans, Einthoven introduced a specific form of psychological warfare, 'divide et impera'. The first of two PSYWAR operations started in 1956, by means of BVD officials posing as communist party members, sowing distrust and discord within the highest party ranks. In a second operation the BVD established a rival communist party of its own, the Socialist Workers' Party, on 12th July 1957, in order to distract the CPN in fighting paper tigers and draining energy from the communist cadre (Engelen 1995, 218-46).

[35] This service existed until 2002, when it was transformed and renamed the General Intelligence and Security Agency (*Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*), which exists to this day.

3.4 A Civil Service Fighting a War – Concluding Remarks

Whereas the Central Intelligence Service observed that all was quiet on the communist front in the 1930s, the Second World War changed threat perceptions irreversibly. During the war, although communists played an important role in the resistance, a 'repetition of November 18' was feared by the Dutch government in London and resistance fighters alike. The German occupation and wartime experience moreover caused widespread anti-totalitarianism. The security service used the symbolic and conspiratorial elements of the communist threat to successfully politicize and securitize the threat. In the second half of the 1940s, as opposed to the preceding decade, communism seemed to become a mass-based phenomenon again. Moreover, the German occupation and the role the Dutch right-wing extremist parties had played before the war now gave the Dutch communists a very acute and military threatening character. Communists in the Netherlands were perceived as a true fifth column. Democratic order, even freedom was considered as being under siege, both from the outside and from within; not only in the Netherlands, but in the entire Western, free world.

Whilst the prewar security service was the product of neutrality policy and thus concentrated on the apolitical referent object of the communist threat, i.e. public order, peace, and authority, Einthoven's security service considered communist activities in the light of the new international order after 1945: Communism had gained major military and political momentum and threatened to undermine the whole free, western world. To prevent this from happening, the security service was allowed almost free reign. Einthoven made sure that he structured the BVD organization in such a way that his organization was best equipped to fight what threatened the free world most: communism. With over 600 employees, Einthoven was able to professionalize the domestic intelligence work and collect substantially more intelligence on the communist adversary than ever before. He structured the organization to suit this essentially anti-communist task and even used psychological warfare operations to break the communist strength. Although the BVD was a civilian security service and used civilian means, Einthoven perceived himself to be in military combat with his communist adversary. Therefore he framed the communist threat in military, ideological, and international terms, which legitimized and prioritized his endeavors.

4. Communism as an All-Encompassing Threat (1960-1989)

4.1 A Threat Beyond any Formal Measurement – The Referent Subject

In the 1960s, history seemed to repeat itself. Just as communism became less of an actual, but more of an abstract and potential threat in the 1930s, somewhere in the 1960s communism seemed to become less threatening than it had been since the Second World War. As the years progressed after the war, Western European governments were less and less convinced that a third world war would start anytime soon (Van der Boom 2001, 11). Already in the 1950s several indications pointed in this direction. In the first place, the Premier of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, had died in 1953. This led to a temporary and mild détente in international relations. Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev started a campaign to 'destalinize' the Soviet Union and steered towards improving relations with the West. In 1955 the Soviet Union and the United States were formally on speaking terms again, at the conference of Geneva where they discussed the terms for ending the war in Korea, and other global affairs. And in 1956 Khrushchev announced the policy of 'peaceful coexistence'. Khrushchev claimed that the communist bloc and the West could coexist peacefully, without having to destroy or dominate one another (Havenaar 1993, 122-4). In 1959 Khrushchev and the US president Dwight Eisenhower held talks in Camp David, and although the Cuban Crisis of 1962 brought the world to the edge of war, soon thereafter international relations changed for the better (Hellema 2001, 178).

Secondly, throughout the 1950s the United States was not the only party with nuclear arms any more. American intelligence indicated that the Soviet Union conducted successful tests with the H-bomb in 1952 and 1954, demonstrating that the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal was reaching NATO levels. In other words, both parties now had nuclear capabilities and possessed 'the bomb' (Judt 2005, 273). Within NATO this led to the decision to deploy nuclear weapons on Western European territory. The cabinet of Willem Drees accepted that NATO could install nuclear missiles on Dutch territory in January 1958, which was effectuated in 1960 (Hellema 1995, 182-3). This implied that future warfare, for which both global power blocs were preparing, would not be conventional; it would be nuclear. Although on the one hand, as a Dutch government official remarked in a memorandum, this meant that the sooner the enemy was paralyzed the better, many government officials also expected that the 'reciprocity of the expected horrors' and the 'mutually assured destruction'

(MAD) would restrain both parties from going to war too quickly.[36] Although both parties still had to demonstrate their willingness and capability to go to war at any moment, in the short term war was becoming less likely (Freedman 1981, 234; Crozier 1998, 177; Gaddis 2005, 25-7; Traa 2009, 169). In an internal report the security service observed that the 'military position' of both parties was 'stuck'. 'Humanity' started to realize that continuing the war was impossible without risking 'self-destruction'.[37]

However, for the BVD peaceful coexistence was a farce. Louis Einthoven made it clear in his memoirs that he was not going to give credit to Soviet leaders like Khrushchev, who had previously threatened Western leaders, saying 'We will bury you', or to the head of the intelligence service KGB, Andropov, who was overheard saying that 'peaceful coexistence was a form of class struggle' (Einthoven 1974, 214). The real reason behind the peaceful coexistence talks was "probably to spread among the populations the thought that maintaining and expanding intensive defense establishments and defense instruments would be unnecessary."[38] Nor did the service give credit to the apparent tactical move of the Communist Party of the Netherlands in opening up to other political parties. For the BVD, this was merely another attempt to win support: "a communist party propagating flexibility and compromise would exercise the strongest attraction to the masses."[39]

In the eyes of the BVD, therefore, the referent subject of the communist threat transformed in three different respects. In the first place, the deceiving character of communists came to the fore. As another government agency wrote in a memorandum in 1955: if one is "to understand the real meaning of the words and deeds of communist leaders, one should not appreciate their apparent meaning, but should see them against a background of communist struggle which started a hundred years ago and aims at the establishing the world communist society."[40]

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[36] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 11778, Memorandum *Defensie Studiecentrum*, How to psychologically prepare the Dutch population?, [without date, probably 1955].

[37] Semi Static Archive of the *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*, Memorandum of A. Kuipers, Sketch for an effective organization of the service, 1959.

[38] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 4735, Memorandum of J. Burger to minister of Interior Affairs, November 1954.

[39] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 4735, Letter of the *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* to the *Vaste Kamercommissie voor de Controle op de Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, The political direction of the *Communistische Partij Nederland* after the session of the party leadership, 17th November 1955.

[40] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number

Secondly, the scope and size of the communist problem had expanded immensely. From a short-term, military, and imminent threat, communism had transformed into a long-term, enduring enemy which attempted to undermine the West with all means and tactics. In a report in which the security service informed parliament on the anticommunist security measures in the United States, an American statesman was approvingly cited saying that 'the strength of the communist party is beyond any formal measurement'. Even if the membership numbers of communist organizations went down, their potential for mobilizing support gave the communists an aura of everlasting potential.[41]

Thirdly, this led the BVD to persist in interpreting the communist threat in ideological terms which resulted in an almost metaphysical threat perception. Even when the CPN severed all ties with Moscow and announced its policy of autonomy (1963-1977) – the CPN refused to choose between China and Moscow – the service still saw the CPN as the manifestation of a global communist network, commanded by Moscow. For the security service, the direct connections between a foreign power and a political party were the main reason for a continued focus on Dutch communism, because of the omnipresent possibility of another regime interfering in domestic politics. Although these ties were cut, this did not lead the security service to conclude that Dutch communists became less threatening. "Communism changed in some respects, but until now its essence has not," the head of service Sinninghe Damsté warned to the minister of interior affairs in 1967. The symbolic character prevailed: as long as communist parties were around, they were potentially dangerous.[42]

4.2 Manipulation in the Political Arena – The Referent Object

The referent object of a global communist conspiracy remained in essence the same. Western democracy, culture, and freedom were at stake. Only the dimensions and domains in which to expect communist conspiratorial activities to erupt changed, according to the *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*. On the one hand, the threat became less tangible and therefore it became more difficult to ascertain how the Dutch communists would try to attain their goals. On the other hand, it had become clear that communist activities had shifted from presenting a military threat to becoming a menace on the political and psychological front. In the eyes of the BVD the Soviet Union had merely decided that "military aggression was not a suitable method in these times." It nevertheless

11778, Memorandum of the *Bijzondere Voorlichtingscommissie* on the Cold War and psychological warfare, November 1955.

[41] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the House of Representatives, entry 2.02.28, inventory number 4735. Some remarks on communism in the United States and the fight against communism.

[42] Semi Static Archive of the *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*, Report of meeting between head of the BVD and the minister of Interior Affairs, 8th June 1967.

continued to avail itself of every other thinkable method short of war to expand its power position in the world, according to the head of the security service (Einthoven 1974, 214).[43]

Communist influence was now less tangible, so in addition to looking for saboteurs in the governmental apparatuses, the security service focused on more refined ways of influence.[44] One of the well-tried tactics the communists used, for example, was to infiltrate or manipulate existing political parties and organizations in order to gain influence and maybe steer them into a more procommunist course. The security service therefore maintained close contact with the leaders of political parties, unions, and other societal institutions to monitor whether they had communists in their ranks. In fact, the CPN did attempt to infiltrate various youth organizations in the 1970s, and they were very influential in the pacifist movement and in the organizations opposing nuclear armament in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[45] To a certain extent, the BVD was right in suspecting illicit interference of a communist country, for example the German Democratic Republic, in domestic political affairs (De Graaf 2004, 90-6).

4.3 Fighting Communism in a Much More Antagonistic Environment – The Response

Because the security service perceived communism as a perennial, unchanging threat, it did not feel the necessity of adapting its own security logics either. It still aspired to know who the communists were and what they did. Although other threatening groups such as student activists and terrorists increasingly demanded the attention of the BVD, the service continued to keep its eyes and ears fixed on the members of the Communist Party of the Netherlands, their internal discussions, and their political plans. Even when a growing anti-anticommunist political and societal environment induced the BVD to adapt and accommodate its anticommunist threat perceptions, despite several internal discussions the BVD continued to frame the threat in an almost metaphysical and highly ideological way.

This was exemplified when Minister of Interior Affairs Ed van Thijn tried to end the interference of the Dutch security service BVD in the CPN. In response the head of the security service Pieter de Haan defended the view that it was not 'the entire communist party' that was considered a threat, but certain indi-

[43] National Archive, The Hague, Archive of the Ministries for General Warfare of the Realm and General Affairs, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, entry 2.03.01, inventory number 11930; BVD contribution to a report from the *Comité Verenigde Inlichtingendiensten Nederland*, 10th May 1958.

[44] Semi Static Archive of the *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*, Memorandum of A. Kuipers, Sketch for an effective organization of the service, 1959.

[45] Proceedings of the House of Representatives, sessions 1979-1980, Document number 15936.

viduals and certain political goals of the organization. This was called 'the aspect approach'. Because Van Thijn soon afterwards had to step down and gave way to a more negligent minister, the security service was able to continue its operations against the Dutch communists until 1987, when it was decided that the operational activities in the CPN should be terminated (Vos 2004, 36-7; Engelen 2007, 234-5).

4.4 Potentially, But All Around – Concluding Remarks

Due to a détente in international relations and the fact that both parties possessed nuclear weapons, the actual and imminent characteristics of the communist threat changed. It became less probable that war would break out in the short term. This would suggest that the security service would adapt its military and ideological interpretation of the Dutch communist organizations. However, the BVD did not. Although an internal report remarked that the political domain would probably become more important, there was no attempt to 'desecuritize' the communist threat and to redirect intelligence resources elsewhere.

The security service thus expressed confidently that the 'peaceful coexistence' was a farce and that the proclaimed autonomy of the Communist Party of the Netherlands was a tactical maneuver as well. Indeed, instead of becoming less threatening, communism gained even larger threatening proportions. For the BVD, it was clear that the communists were saying different things from what they were actually doing. Therefore their plans became even more subtle, unknowable, and secretive and thus it became increasingly difficult to know when and where communists would become active.

We could argue that on the one hand, symbolism exercised an important influence in this period. Given the alleged unchanging nature of the communist ideology, the security service kept on interpreting what the communists did in the light of their original, Marxist-Leninist aim to start a revolution and bring down existing governments. Despite their limited capabilities for actually staging such a coup, its presence made communist parties an unchanging potential threat. On the other hand, mechanisms of cognitive bias accounted for this. As long as this symbolic enemy was present, the security service thought it was relevant to obtain knowledge about what was going on in the Communist Party of the Netherlands; through the years it had obtained an extensive base of knowledge about the communist adversary, so that every new bit of information confirmed the unchanging communist potential for world revolution. 'Beginning from the known' was always the directory of intelligence work. Confirming that communism was threatening was the essential way the BVD gathered intelligence. The service did not try to find any information that invalidated this presupposition (De Valk 1996, 11, 44; Engelen 2007, 44).

5. The Perpetual Adversary

Let us turn once more to the former employee of the BVD in the introduction of this article, who called the disintegration of the Soviet Union a cunning plot. It was seemingly impossible for the Dutch security services to let go of its existential adversary and conceive communism as 'not threatening any more' and to scale back its organizational efforts vis-à-vis communism on its own account, despite – for example in the 1930s – the observation that communism had become less of a threat. Only late in the 1980s through political interference did the BVD end its operational activities in Dutch communist organizations. To account for this, instead of ascertaining that the security service was an inward-looking organization, we departed from this observation and proposed the use of insights from securitization and organization theory and intelligence studies to scrutinize the threat perceptions of the Dutch security services. We discerned the referent subject and object of the threat and the security measures in the domestic intelligence domain in three different periods of time (1918-1940, 1940-1960, and 1960-1989) to gain insight into the dynamics with which the threat perceptions of the security services took shape.

Looking over this entire period, we understand that the symbolic nature of the communist threat dominated the referent subject and object of the threat perceptions. Symbolism, as we said in the introduction, implies that something by definition refers to something other than itself. Since the revolutionary autumn of 1918, Dutch communism represented not what it actually did, but always what it might do, according to its ideology (world communism) and its ties with a foreign power (the Soviet Union). Until the beginning of the 1920s the Central Intelligence Service most importantly feared that communist agitation would spill over from Germany and thus encourage Dutch communists to scale up their aspirations. Although nothing happened and Dutch communism ceased to be as threatening as before because support decreased (only some intellectuals still bothered), the Dutch communist organizations remained an object of the security services' attention.

Through the Second World War, communism became more threatening than ever before. This war had shown how threatening totalitarianism actually was and this put Dutch communism in a new perspective. Stalin now appeared to strive for world domination and in the light of this increasing external threat, the domestic communists transformed into a fifth column: an actual, military and acute political threat, aiming to undermine the political system, the economic order, and the government apparatus. The referent object switched from public order and authority to Dutch national security and that of the free world as a whole, united in the military alliance of NATO. The actual communist supportive base seemed greater than ever.

After Stalin's death in 1953 and more clearly after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, détente set in. Military aggression by the Soviet Union became less

likely, since both power blocs disposed of nuclear weaponry. Dutch communists transformed from an acute military into a less tangible, political, and psychological threat. The referent subject and object became increasingly vague and abstract. But although its shape might have changed, the BVD argued, its essence had not. The communist menace was still a menace. Peaceful coexistence was a farce and although it was practically inconceivable that the CPN was capable of staging a revolution, the BVD continued to interpret the activities of the Dutch communist organizations.

To understand this, we have to recognize the powerful symbols in the communist threat. Although the conspiratorial character remained essentially the same, due to the perceived essentialism attribute given to the communist ideology, the employment of this symbolic significance varied over time. References to their *potential* threatening character increased in the security services' reports whenever the vivid memory of past threats started to dissolve, which happened in the 1930s and from the 1960s on. During these periods the symbolic elements, i.e. the references to the ideology and conspiratorial nature of communism, emerged more frequently in the reports of the security services. The exact object of the threat and the timeframe became increasingly vague in these periods.

To explain this in securitization terms, the communist threat was never *desecuritized*, i.e. never pushed into the domain of normal politics. Neither the referent subject nor the referent object of the communist threat changed in such a way that the security service considered it no longer necessary to monitor it. When changes occurred, the rationalizations and depictions of the communist threat changed, but the responses were never a decrease in efforts. These remained the same or increased throughout the entire period. Communism was never considered part of the 'normal', or bona fide political domain.

Besides this, 'cognitive closure' and organizational theory help to account for this. From the Second World War on, 'beginning from the known' was the leading intelligence principle. All intelligence gathered on the Dutch communist organizations since then confirmed the same thing: communism was dangerous. Every mutation, utterance, thought, in fact even trivial fact that was related to the communist threat obtained significance because of this mechanism. All new information confirmed the threatening character of Dutch communism, pointing to past experiences and timeless, metaphysical threat perceptions, rather than to actual political developments.

These inward-oriented and closed threat assessments were caused by the institutionalization of the domestic intelligence function. Louis Einthoven structured the postwar security services in such a way that the services were best equipped to oppose communism. The security services specialized in methods and techniques, which they refined year in year out, to gather intelligence on extremist organizations and individuals. They kept doing so, because they were good at that. Moreover, the service's resources profited highly from this threat

perception. This might explain the interest of the security service in holding onto its traditional adversary until far into the 1980s. Only when the organization was fundamentally transformed and the political establishment demanded change was the well-known communist adversary let go.

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